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# Communications in ontario



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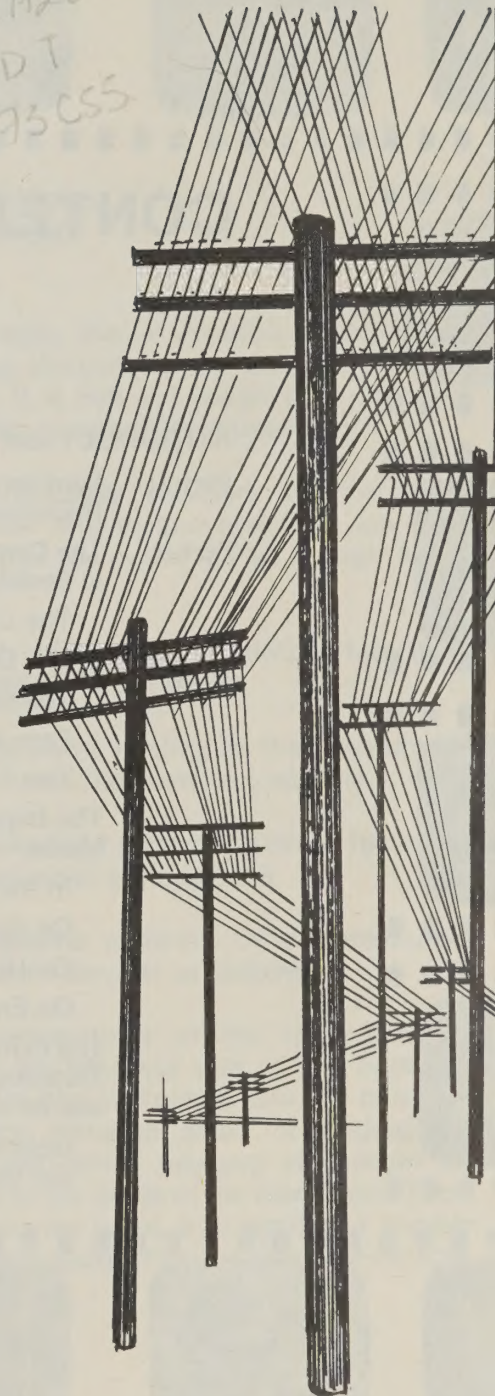
# Communications in Ontario

FINDINGS OF A SURVEY OF PUBLIC ATTITUDES — 1973

HUMAN, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS RESEARCH SECTION  
AND  
COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION



Ministry of  
Transportation and  
Communications





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# INTRODUCTION

"Communication - a difficult subject - because it involves everything we do - our work life, our home environment - our life. To examine it, to suggest improvement is, in some respects, to examine our own lifestyle and quality of life."

- survey participant

The means of communication are vital to any individual and to any community. Telecommunications — one of the principal means of communicating — has become a vast, complex and essentially remote enterprise. Suppliers of telecommunications services and equipment have always been subject to federal government regulation. Safeguarding the interests of the people on whose behalf telecommunications services are provided has been long recognized as necessary.

The Government of Ontario recently expressed its intent to ensure that the interests of the people of Ontario were fully represented in future development associated with radio and television broadcasting, educational television, cable and special purpose video, data transmission systems, telephone and telegraph services and the use of the Telesat communications satellite. The role of telecommunications in people's lives and the extent to which the telecommunications industry is satisfying the communication needs of Ontario's population

are matters of prime concern to the Province.

This report represents the findings of a major social survey which was conducted by the Ministry of Transportation and Communications. The survey provided a novel method for people to express their thoughts and feelings about communications in Ontario. These survey findings enable the Government of Ontario to become better informed regarding the issues and concerns which people express when they think about and discuss communications.

The report is a synthesis of the information generated in 72 discussion groups involving 850 participants and conducted by independent consultants in eight regions of the Province. It presents a composite view and interpretation of the attitudes of the participants about the effect of communications on their lives.

This interpretation should be viewed as a set of hypotheses that can be verified by public debate or by formal, scientific research.

## HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

In presenting the information gained during the group discussions, the authors have tried to make it as rich and complete, as unbiased and as easy to assimilate as possible.

An interpretative summary of the major conclusions and recommendations has been presented at the outset in Part 1, pages 4 to 7 inclusive.

The body of the report is divided into three major sections which reflect

concerns relating to the centrality of communications to social life

impact of mass media in the formation of social attitudes, and

specific criticisms of telecommunications services or policies.

The interpretations of the researchers are given on the left-hand side of the book (or page). On the right-hand side, in bold-face type, the principal issues or propositions within each broad category of concern are reported in the words of the researchers. These statements are based on a significant number of verbatim quotes from the discussion records.



# **PART I:**

## **SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Conclusions are of two types: those which describe findings for which the principal attitudes seem to be well established and for which the public sentiment is unequivocal; and those which describe conditions of major perplexity or dilemma which leave people uncertain of the action to be taken or by whom actions should be taken.

1. Next to face-to-face talking, the telephone emerged as the second most valued form of communication. It is wanted and unambiguously valued because it fulfils social needs. These needs are to provide security in emergencies, and to enable personal contacts which are for many the basic
2. Inequalities of access to broadcast media are perceived as causes of isolation. This isolation was interpreted to mean being cut-off physically from the mainstream of Ontario culture. The complaint is that by not having access to the same information as others it was not possible

meaning in their existence. Except in North-western Ontario, people do not judge the costs of telephone service to be high in relation to the benefits derived from it. Any reduction in the availability or quality of telephone services is regarded as inconceivable.

to receive a fair share of the richness of our society. The demand for more telecommunication facilities is therefore interpreted as a demand for equality of access to the community of Ontario and to the richness of interaction which others enjoy.

**RECOMMENDATION 1 — That any changes in telephone service which would affect private or personal conversation should take into account the overriding importance and value of the telephone for enriching personal lives and providing security.**

**RECOMMENDATION 2 — That any change in telecommunications policy should identify and take into account existing and potential inequalities of opportunity to share communication benefits.**

3. Things which increase the sense of identification and communication with others such as the local papers, community television, community centres, clubs, and group meetings were

seen as desirable, yet gradually disappearing or unavailable. They are highly valued for the security they provide from the isolation of modern life.

4. Children rely heavily on television for finding out what the world is like. They are strongly influenced by television programming. They do not, however, seem to recognize the effect television is

having on them. The generation of children brought up with television has shown an intense cynicism towards the state of the world and social reality as portrayed by television.

5. Conventional mass media are unable to satisfy the wide variety of tastes and interests arising from the rich and varied cultures found in Ontario. This has

produced a sense of isolation by individual cultural groups and denies the individual the freedom from an imposition of mass tastes.

**RECOMMENDATION 3** — That any telecommunications policy should be examined with a view to its possible impact upon existing communication networks and technologies which support a sense of community identification. Will new technology substitute for or be competitive with what now enhances a sense of identification with others? How can community identity be safeguarded?

**RECOMMENDATION 4** — That telecommunications policy should take into account its potential effect on children, especially the capacity of television to create cynicism.

**RECOMMENDATION 5** — That communications policy should recognize this dissatisfaction with non-existent "minority" programming which contributes to the social alienation of considerable segments of the population.



The remaining conclusions identify perplexities or important doubts about mass media. What are the feasible or desirable responses to these perplexities is not at all clear. There are no generally accepted responses, but individuals believe that the finding of solutions for these problems is important. Therefore there is a need for study, understanding and trial solutions before definite society-wide changes are made.

6. Many people regarded their television viewing as habitual, time-consuming and almost addictive behaviour. They were uncertain about how healthy such behaviour was because they noticed that protracted viewing disrupted desired patterns of family and social life and that a significant amount of viewing

involved programs they did not like. An examination of the uses to which such viewing of television is put revealed that television serves an important therapeutic purpose in stress reduction. The personal dilemma is whether such viewing behaviour should be modified.

**RECOMMENDATION 6 —** That research be directed towards an examination of ways to make time spent viewing more meaningful, toward the addictive quality of television, and toward alternative activities that serve the therapeutic purpose of stress reduction without the disadvantages of mass media.

7. There is a widely held preference for a reduction in the amount of advertising in the mass media or to a modification of its presentation. Much advertising is felt to be disturbing, irritating, manipulative, slighting of certain social groups, and wasteful in the face of the emerging

social concern over excessive consumption. If advertising is too radically restricted, however, unpleasant economic consequences are feared. People clearly do not know yet how to resolve this dilemma of shifting values.

**RECOMMENDATION 7 —** That research be conducted into the feasibility and acceptability of alternative ways of financing mass media and on the effects of such alternatives on the individual and the economy.



8. There is extensive, deep concern regarding the contribution of television to the intellectual and social education of children. Parents struggle with the question of what and how much their children should learn from television,

from interaction with their parents and teachers, and from books and print. The abandonment of the child to the values and facts of the mass media makes them feel uneasy.

**RECOMMENDATION 8** — The most immediate assistance which government could give to parents who are dealing with this problem would be to support and conduct studies which:

- a) contribute to a better understanding of television's impact on children (e.g., violence, sex, consumption, values);
- b) examine the educational and cultural values of television for children;
- c) probe the perception and use of books by to-day's television-oriented children;
- d) and attempt to project the ultimate effects of all these phenomena upon our culture.

People question where the control over mass communication should be. Should the individual control his own exposure to the media? Should business control the family's exposure? Should government control society's exposure? People recognize the basic complexity of this problem. They are actively pursuing some resolution, but have not taken a permanent or comfortable position on these questions.

Because the issues are the education of children, the opportunity for happiness of individuals in the society, and the pursuit of economic goals, neither the people's deliberations nor the government's decisions can be expected to reach satisfactory conclusions easily or quickly. As it stands now the individual sees no possibility to decide on overall programming policies and is faced with the burden of imposing self-censorship on media programming.

There is much felt ignorance on how to influence programming decisions, on how to change the media for the better, and on the role of governments in deciding media programming.



## PART II:

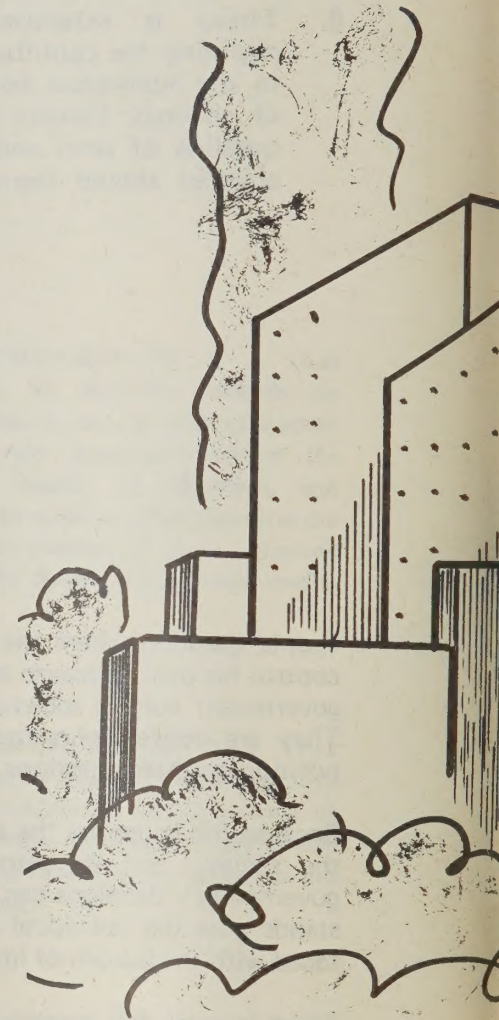
# THE CENTRALITY OF COMMUNICATIONS IN SOCIAL LIFE

## the loss of socially meaningful contact

*"I live in an apartment building and I don't even know the neighbours next door, least of all would be able to carry on a social evening with them. And it seems to be a coldness of the 70's or my generation".*

The groups generally expressed an acute awareness of the far-reaching role communications have in their own lives. Concern about the impact of communications on modern life in general was widely spread. Isolation from other people was experienced and feared.

The statement was often made in the past that life used to provide more socially meaningful contact, that in the past human interaction was conducted more personally. Modern society with its computers, large urban centres and wide-ranging mobility patterns has produced loneliness, and alienation. People feel that they must learn to cope with this reality but they continue to lament the passing of earlier days when talking was important.







A - 1\* Aloofness and alienation are endemic to modern society.

A - 2 Ironically, it seems that in this age of telecommunications, society as a whole displays poor social communication. The computer has spawned an impersonal numbered society and despite all our mass communications, individual loneliness remains as a real problem.

A - 3 The modern means of moving and storing information may reduce interpersonal contact. This may occur between individuals, between communities or between regions and their governments.

A - 4 Interpersonal communication is a problem in large urban centres which produce loneliness and alienation. St. Catharines is a warm friendly burg to Torontonians but a cold metropolis to natives of Thorold.

A - 5 There is a widespread unease with contemporary living. Life was better in the past when there was less tension, people didn't rush about, people were nicer and families communicated.

A - 6 The main advantage of a small town is that people can still talk to one another.

A - 7 It is extremely difficult to establish honest direct and accurate communication with another person.

A - 8 People expressed the importance and the difficulty of keeping in touch with family and friends.

A - 9 People don't care to or don't have time to talk with each other nowadays.

A - 10 Good communications are necessary to build friendships.

A - 11 Media which provide home entertainment tend to make people less willing to exert the effort to maintain friendships. The view was expressed that the initial intrigue with television was waning and people hoped for a return to more sociable practices.

A - 12 In the midst of all this technological hardware, interpersonal communication is still essential for the achievement of satisfaction.

A - 13 In a society of broad-ranging mobility patterns it is important to develop the ability to adjust to ever-changing sets of people and circumstances. Society must learn to cope with living in densely populated areas.

A - 14 Ours is a mobile society in which families and friends are being separated. Thus there is a definite need for efficient and reliable telecommunication facilities to bridge the gap.

\* The coding refers to the original tapes of the discussions.

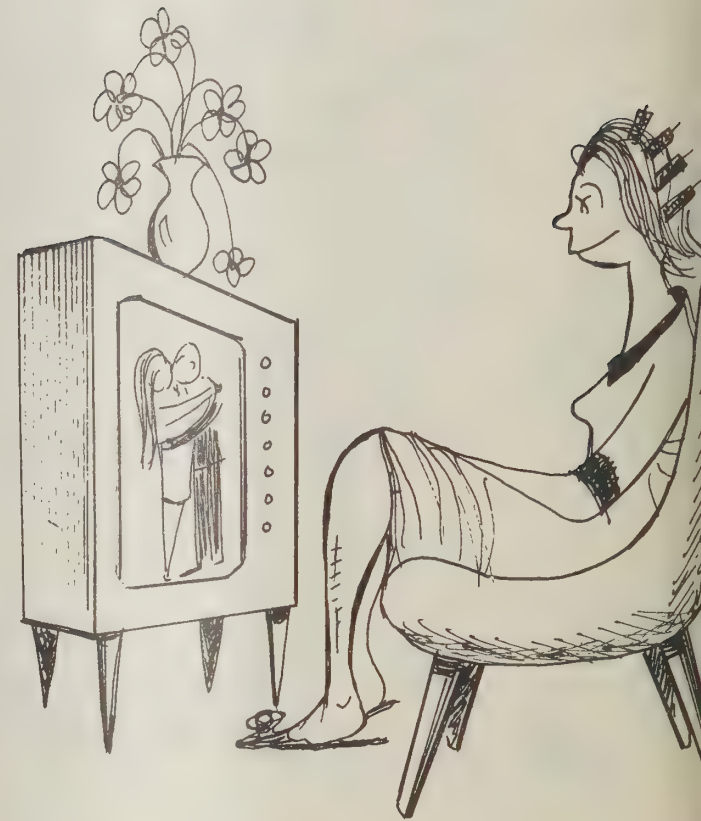


## the deterioration of family life

*"Then again, my wife and I, not that we don't like each other, it's just that we don't talk to each other that much. Like we should. It's got to the point that we don't seem to have a lot to say to each other, because the T.V.'s there".*

Many people in the survey expressed the view that family ties are loosening. Children appear to be drifting away and spouses are not communicating as they should. Modern media (especially television) were felt by many to be related to this unfortunate situation. Because of television, parents spend less time with each other and with their children. Modern media have substantially altered the quality and quantity of social interaction.

It was not uncommon to hear complaints that family unity was strained by the influence of the media. Television undermines parental authority because it teaches values which are different from those parents are trying to encourage. It contributes thus to a widening of the generation gap and a decline in respect toward parents. Other factors which were felt to contribute to problems in the family were working mothers, shift work and early retirement.





B - 1 The use of television for discipline and behaviour control in children is a source of child-parent friction.

B - 2 Parents express the view that it is harder to raise children because there is a lack of respect for parents today.

B - 3 Because of television, parents spend less time with their children. This is due to the extensive viewing habits of either parents or children. Some parents wrongfully use the television as a babysitter.



B - 4 Commercial messages aimed at children create problems for parents because there is great pressure placed on the parent to satisfy the demands of children.

B - 5 The "generation gap" is still a valid and relevant issue for many parents and children.

B - 6 Many parents feel that if it were not for television, they could get their children to engage in more activities.

B - 7 Television undermines parental authority because it teaches values which are not consistent with those that parents are trying to encourage.

B - 8 The growth of telecommunications has contributed greatly to our changed world and may be at the root of differences between parents and children today.

B - 9 Relationships between spouses have deteriorated because of the disruption of television.

B - 10 Husbands and wives buy two television sets so that each can watch what he or she wants.

B - 11 The effect of the working mother on the conduct of family life was a discussed but unresolved issue.

B - 12 Shift work disrupts communication in one's social and family life.

B - 13 Some women mentioned the value of intra-family memoranda. It was felt that the time and deliberation required to phrase the memo often leads to a dissipation of anger and frustration and thus to clearer, less abrasive communication.

B - 14 Television has a strong, anti-social impact on our lives; it has caused a decline in inter-personal and intra-family communication.

B - 15 Since television has come to most households, family visitations and gatherings have diminished.

B - 16 In a few instances people maintained that family media actually brought members closer together because the family sits in the same room together to watch television. Otherwise they would never see each other.

B - 17 Even the telephone can disrupt home organization; some ladies enjoy making calls but are not so eager to receive them.

B - 18 A crisis confronts older women when members of their families have matured and left home. Many in this position are too often unsuccessful in their search for new avenues of contact.

B - 19 Retirement is a problem for husbands and wives because they have to adjust to being together twenty-four hours a day.



# the need for identification with others

Things which increase the sense of identification and communication with others were seen as desirable. This need for acceptance was revealed as a desire for fuller self-expression as embodied in the statement "People are afraid to let anyone know what they're really like inside".

The need to belong was most visible at the community level. People want greater community cohesiveness and personal involvement. They feel that government could help them by establishing more community centre programs and by supporting community newspapers.

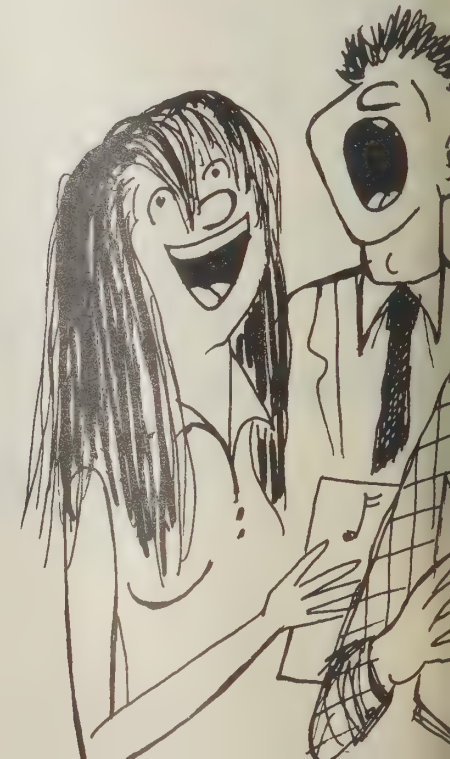
Cable television is viewed as having a vast and relatively untapped potential in community programming. Conversely, the absence of effective channels of community communications has resulted in a poorer quality, less meaningful lifestyle.

Graphic evidence of the power of media communications in determining identification patterns is provided in Northwestern Ontario. The majority of media communications originate from Manitoba and people report that they identify more closely with that province than with Ontario.

Several people expressed the need to safeguard the Canadian cultural heritage and identity against the inundation of American media material. This is interpreted as

representing the same insecurity, the same need for identity and belonging, as expressed at individual and community levels. That people feel a need to increase their sense of identification with others, with the local community and with their country, reflects the insecurity that is felt in modern life.

Mass media, notably television, have weakened the quality of inter-personal communication in the community and have done much to contribute to this insecurity. People feel communication can and should be improved to increase their sense of identification with others and to make their lives more enjoyable.





C - 1 People commented on the vast and relatively untapped potential of cable television in the area of community programming.

C - 2 There is a need for better communication of community information. Bulletin boards in plazas were cited as valuable but should be expanded and refined to satisfy the real need for community information.

C - 3 Several groups named community newspapers as an important means of gaining information about local affairs and activities.

C - 4 People buy newspapers from their hometown to remain a part of what goes on there.

C - 5 Community newspapers were seen as a more practical tool than citizen T.V. or radio channels for achieving improvements in the quality of life.

C - 6 Television has weakened the quality of inter-personal communication in the community.

C - 7 People regretted that community activities were being severely curtailed by television.

C - 8 People expressed the need to safeguard our cultural heritage and identity against the inundation of American media material. Supporters of this view cited the development in the Canadian film industry as evidence of the benefits to be gained by encouraging Canadian endeavours.

C - 9 The American influence was considerably more worrisome to some than to others.

C - 11 The American ignorance of Canada was lamented. It was suggested that some attempt should be made to educate Americans about our country.

C - 12 The concern was expressed that children know more about the United States than they do about Canada.

C - 13 There is a need to provide people with greater opportunities for community involvement. Government should subsidize more and better community centre programmes.

C - 14 "Hot Line" shows provide the listener with a community perspective on topics of local importance. Such programs should be conducted in prime time to allow a wider variety of people to participate.

C - 15 Canada's size and the isolation of many communities makes communications very important to people.

C - 16 We need better communications between the various parts of Canada to strengthen the country.

C - 17 The people of Northwestern Ontario receive the majority (in most cases all) of their media communications from Manitoba. They felt that they were more closely connected with that province and identified more with it.

C - 18 The view was expressed that television gives some insight into different cultures and lifestyles and thus contributes to the integration of the community.

C - 19 Although deficiencies in community newspapers were pointed out, no groups wished to be without these as they were said to contribute to a sense of community identity which people valued.

C - 20 There is a need for communication between and within cultural groups to maintain group identity. The native Canadian group wanted to have a community newspaper of their own.





# face to face talking

*"I'd just like to say one thing, that they can take all their communications, telephone, television, radio, but without personal communication, I think the world is lost".*

In every area covered by the survey, face-to-face talking is an extremely important and vital aspect of communicating. People valued this form of communicating as being essential for them to develop their ideas, to solve problems, especially personal ones, and to find out what is going on in their locality. For many, it is the major source of recreation and probably the most important thing that makes life meaningful and worthwhile. It seems to be the only way in which new friends can be made and old relationships can be maintained. Talking emerged clearly as the most valued form of communication in Ontario.







D - 1 Talking is rewarding because it helps you to get to know people.

D - 2 Talking helps you work out personal problems.

D - 3 Talking is an honest more revealing form of communication because it is possible to really determine how people feel.

D - 4 Group discussions are valued as a successful form of communication because they provide a healthy exchange of ideas.

D - 5 Talking is a two-way communication which develops your ideas and widens your perspective.

D - 6 Speaking is essential to the transmission of knowledge from one individual to another.

D - 7 Listening is essential to a satisfying conversation.

D - 8 In order to fully communicate, the proper language must be used.

D - 9 People express their emotions by talking which serves the therapeutic function of reducing stress for an individual.

D - 10 Talking in leisure time is particularly important for people who work alone all day.

D - 11 Television is resented when it interferes with talking or visiting.



# the telephone: basic technology

*"We'd be lost without the telephone,  
really".*

As an extension to the talking process, the telephone is viewed as the most important communication tool. It is accepted as a utility separate from other telecommunication devices. Women seem to use it extensively for talking to their neighbours and maintaining contact with separated members of the family. They feel this use enriches their lives considerably and they would be extremely unhappy if they lost the use of the telephone for this purpose.

The other major role of the telephone that was strongly expressed was its importance for security both psychological and physical (obtaining a doctor in an emergency, for instance). The telephone's important role in business was recognized but not dwelled upon.





E - 1 The participants displayed a high dependency on the telephone. It was described as being absolutely "essential" in their lives.

E - 2 The value of the telephone lies in its speed and directness.

E - 3 In business it provides an immediate and definite answer.

E - 4 Party lines undermine the efficiency of the telephone as a fast and direct mode of personal communication.

E - 5 The telephone is invaluable in emergencies.

E - 6 The emergency value of the telephone is destroyed by recording devices which are impersonal and inhibit any attempt to relay a coherent message.

E - 7 Information and crises centres are helpful and should be more widespread.

E - 8 Two-way radios in cars, boats and all emergency vehicles are of critical value.

E - 9 The telephone eases the mind because you can phone if you are worried about someone.

E - 10 For people frequently confined to the house, the telephone serves as a means of "visiting" with family and friends and of performing necessary tasks like shopping.

E - 11 The telephone is necessary to promote new and to preserve old inter-personal relationships.

E - 12 The telephone is capable of bridging long distances and thus serves to unite families in a spontaneous and personal manner.

E - 13 The telephone has vast potential as a social tool; it could be systematically employed to establish communicative ties among the elderly and the lonely.

E - 14 Suggestions for improving telephone service include television-telephones, more emergency facilities (e.g., telephones on highways) and generally better communication between Bell Canada and the public.

# THE IMPACTS OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

## ...on the shaping of values...

*“You’d die without communications - it’s life and death; it sort of makes you what you are and what you believe”.*

People recognize the critical influence that the mass media have on the conduct of their lives. They acknowledge some of the media’s harmful effects and they sense the power which media have in the shaping of values and beliefs. Because people believe that the media are powerful in the spreading of values, they exhibit genuine concern about their effects (particularly television) on individuals (notably children) and in establishing the mores for society as a whole.

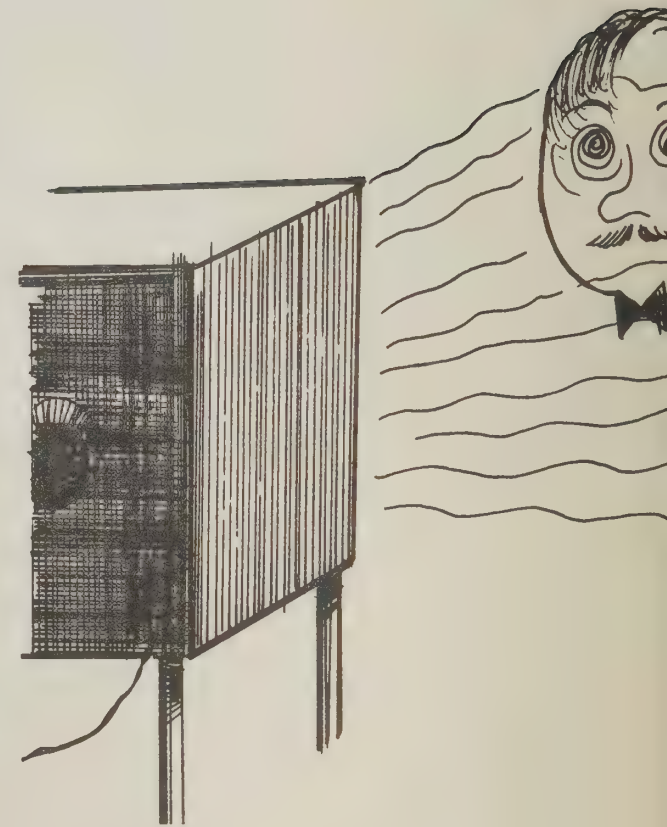


- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>F - 1 Moral and ethical standards are moulded by television.</p> <p>F - 2 Parents use "Family shows" as models for child-rearing practices.</p> <p>F - 3 People have come to accept violence as commonplace as a result of media over-exposure.</p> <p>F - 4 A fear was expressed about the possible spilling of imported violence and crime into Canada's collective consciousness.</p> <p>F - 5 People's morals and ideas are fixed by their age, and very much affected by the various media.</p> <p>F - 6 Some people expressed a dislike of the promotion of what they thought to be American middle-class capitalist values.</p> <p>F - 7 Media do not portray a very accurate image of old people. They appear as something to be laughed at.</p> <p>F - 8 Television has powerful control over people's minds because "a picture is worth a thousand words". Advertisers control people's minds.</p> <p>F - 9 The kind of books you read and the subjects that you take in school affect your view of people.</p> | <p>F - 10 Information fed through the media makes people think and informs them of the issues.</p> <p>F - 11 Mass media play a critical role in determining peoples' political choice.</p> <p>F - 12 Mass media lead to many people being interested in one idea.</p> <p>F - 13 People are highly dependent on the mass media for their information needs and thus are unavoidably subject to media bias. Media can, therefore, mould man's opinion.</p> <p>F - 14 In small towns, where very few alternate media are available, it becomes easy for a select few to shape the opinions and attitudes of an entire town.</p> <p>F - 15 A major cause for alarm was the "brainwashing" effect of commercials on children. One of the more annoying consequences is the pressure placed on the parents to satisfy the media-encouraged demands of the child.</p> <p>F - 16 Many children in the 11 to 13 year old groups claimed immunity from the influence of the media but pointed to the "younger kids" as the real victims.</p> |
|--|--|

## ...on the patterning of behaviour...

*"I think T.V. runs peoples' lives too much. I think there's just too much T.V. They should spend more time reading a book or even listening to the radio instead of watching T.V. It just runs our life".*

Media, principally television, were felt to affect and in some cases to condition the way in which people spend and allocate their time. Television viewing itself was regarded as habitual behaviour which is difficult to modify because of its addictive quality. People regretted that they spent too much time watching television and they felt that there were other more worthwhile activities in which they would participate, if their time was not so consumed by television. Excessive viewing, in addition to being an habitual activity in itself, was also thought to induce real-life imitations of the behaviour shown on television. Many undesirable and anti-social behaviour patterns were linked with television in this manner.







G - 1 Television exerts a compelling and addictive lure on the viewer.

G - 2 The media consume a great deal of people's time, in fact more time than many people really desire to allocate to them.

G - 3 Radio is better than television because it is possible to carry on other activities while listening simultaneously. With television you get drawn to it and other activities are interrupted.

G - 4 Television interferes with outdoor activities in which people would otherwise engage.

G - 5 People plan their time around television programs.

G - 6 It is detrimental to have wide channel selection because then people spend more time watching television and less time doing other activities.

G - 7 Television interferes with homework and housework.

G - 8 The arrival of the morning mail and the daily paper are eagerly awaited rituals in the daily schedule of housewives.

G - 9 Driving is affected by the car radio.

G - 10 Sky-jacking was repeatedly cited as an example of how media programming can and does foster real-life situations.

G - 11 The question was raised whether excessive sex and violence in the media shape our character or merely reflect already innate characteristics.

G - 12 Drug education programs rather than preventing abuse may simply promote curiosity and encourage experimentation.

G - 13 Children read and see a lot of things that aren't good for them and they copy them.

G - 14 Television coverage encourages rabble-rousers and trouble-makers.

G - 15 Some members of the younger group (11 to 13 years) in particular, overtly stated that many of them model their behaviour on examples shown on television.

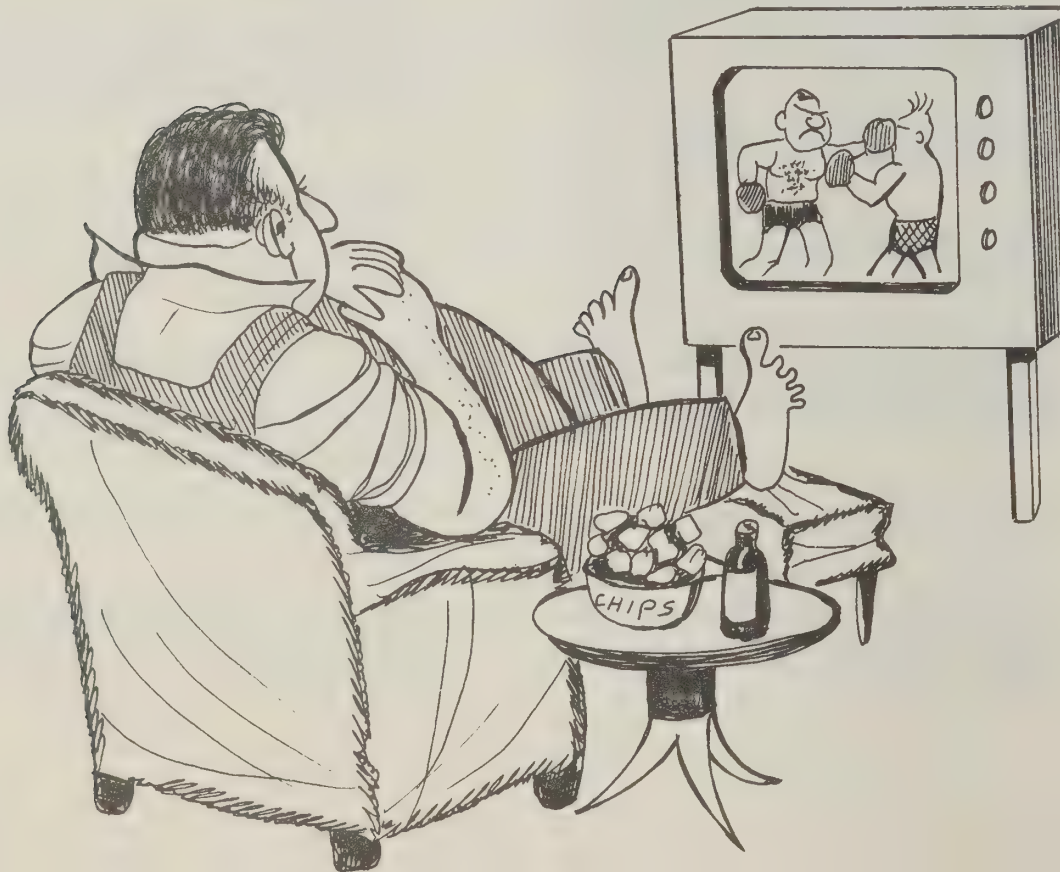
G - 16 Life would be very different without television.

G - 17 There was a feeling that computers will continue to alter our work patterns and income expectations.

## on health...

*"But as I was saying before....we've turned into a nation of spectators instead of a nation of actors".*

The detrimental effects of excessive T.V. watching are felt to include physical as well as mental disabilities. People stated that they would be healthier if they watched less television and participated in more physical activities. It is ironic that people identify athletic programming, which in many areas is felt to dominate the media, as a contributor to lower levels of health and physical fitness in the province.



- H - 1 Television is bad for health. People spend too much time sitting, watching television, instead of getting exercise. There should be breaks on television every so often for a half hour.
- H - 2 The opinion was expressed that television dominates the community's recreation time too much. It would be far healthier if individuals developed alternative recreation outlets.
- H - 3 Physical fitness programs have some utility but people would still be better off to spend the time outside being active, rather than watching the show.
- H - 4 A worry for many people was that there was too much communication directed at them, that people were becoming passive and unable to act.



## ...on emotions...

*"For many women instead of going to a psychiatrist or out for a drink which they need, they use a telephone".*



The emotional impact of television, radio, telephone, personal letters and films was widely mentioned. Apparently, people use communications as a form of emotional therapy to reduce stress and to combat loneliness. Communications often provide people with the stimulation they need to perform daily tasks or with a tranquilizer for relaxation at the end of the day.

Communications were valued for providing companionship to the lonely. The radio in particular seems to function as a mood elevator. While people were aware of the emotional component of communications they also resented its exploitation. Advertisers who appealed to the emotions rather than the intellect were viewed with contempt.

- I - 1 Through television you can escape reality into a fantasy world.
- I - 2 Some people feel that violence and sex in movies ease their frustration.
- I - 3 Television helps you to relax at the end of the day.
- I - 4 Many women use the telephone to talk with friends and to relieve the frustration and stress built up during the day.

- I - 5 Commercial movies were seen as a form of escapism, an aesthetic experience, a manner in which the emotions could be manipulated at the expense of intellectual stimulation.
- I - 6 Talk shows were felt to be therapeutic for callers.
- I - 7 Television provides companionship for those who are alone.
- I - 8 There is an inherent excitement in the receipt of a personal letter.
- I - 9 The radio furnishes a soothing and relaxing musical background.
- I - 10 The radio was valued because it puts people in a good mood in the morning.
- I - 11 Media involvement takes on an addictive quality. People "get hooked" because media have a sedative quality, giving relaxation through the passive ingestion of light entertainment.
- I - 12 The advertising industry was said to be adept at exploiting human fears.
- I - 13 The sub-conscious impact of repetitive or insulting advertising was an upsetting but fascinating topic for many people.

# THE CRITICAL ATTITUDES ABOUT TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICIES AND SERVICES

## isolation and neglect: inequality of access

*"People down east think Ontario stops at Sault Ste. Marie; to them, Northwestern Ontario is a big reservation".*

Inequalities in access to or in the choice of mass media such as radio, television, or newspapers are perceived as the sources of isolation. The degree of isolation is relative to those areas which have the most access to mass communications. The feeling of comparative isolation is therefore not confined solely to Northern Ontario although the level of concern is most acute there.

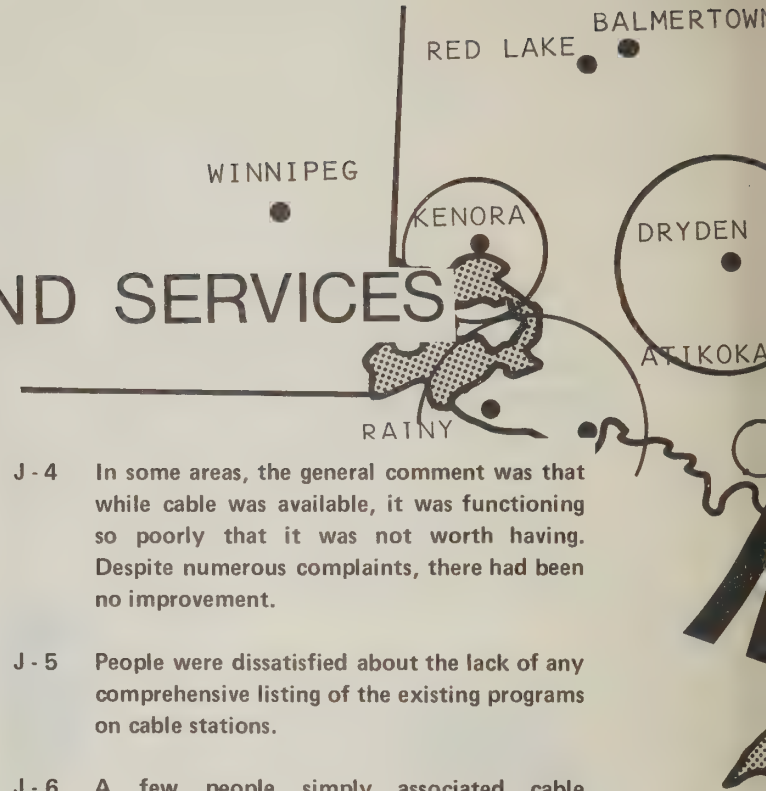
Media communications received in Northwestern Ontario originate almost exclusively from Winnipeg, and while some people felt more attached to Manitoba for this reason, the over-riding sentiment was that Queen's Park has neglected the North. The

least that could be done would be to ensure that, as a minimum, Toronto C.B.C. news got to the North.

People across the province felt that cable television could do much to relieve their feelings of isolation. Other improvements suggested were expanded radio and newspaper services. The establishment of a public television network would provide a viable alternative to the private networks.

- J - 1 Cable television can be instrumental in providing more television and radio stations and thus a broader range of choice.
- J - 2 Cable television was particularly valuable because it could provide access to the educational channels.
- J - 3 People from some regions feel they suffer unnecessarily from the lack of cable television that would give them more channel selection. Settlements without cable television are particularly resentful that the "city folk" can enjoy a selection of channels while they are deprived.

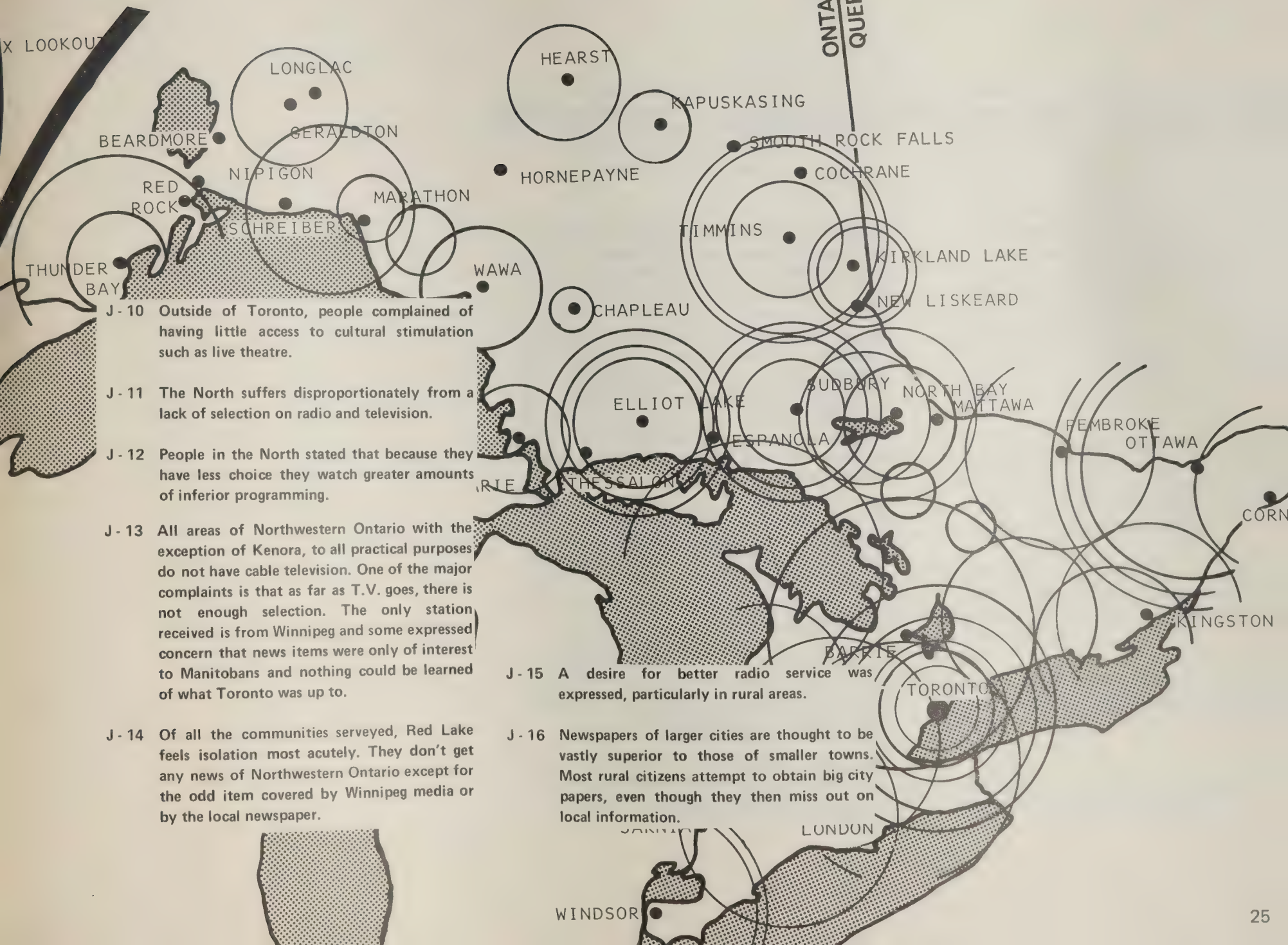
- J - 4 In some areas, the general comment was that while cable was available, it was functioning so poorly that it was not worth having. Despite numerous complaints, there had been no improvement.
- J - 5 People were dissatisfied about the lack of any comprehensive listing of the existing programs on cable stations.
- J - 6 A few people simply associated cable television with FM music, clearer reception and a teletyped description of the news.
- J - 7 The provision of a diverse and broad range of choice within each medium would allow active boycotting of inferior programming and make it possible to force such fare off the air.
- J - 8 The repetition and redundancy of programming was a unanimous complaint.
- J - 9 Scheduling does not meet the needs of the people. Time zone changes make some programs very late and good programs are not presented at convenient times for shift workers.





X LOOKOUT

ONTARIO  
QUEBEC



J - 10 Outside of Toronto, people complained of having little access to cultural stimulation such as live theatre.

J - 11 The North suffers disproportionately from a lack of selection on radio and television.

J - 12 People in the North stated that because they have less choice they watch greater amounts of inferior programming.

J - 13 All areas of Northwestern Ontario with the exception of Kenora, to all practical purposes do not have cable television. One of the major complaints is that as far as T.V. goes, there is not enough selection. The only station received is from Winnipeg and some expressed concern that news items were only of interest to Manitobans and nothing could be learned of what Toronto was up to.

J - 14 Of all the communities surveyed, Red Lake feels isolation most acutely. They don't get any news of Northwestern Ontario except for the odd item covered by Winnipeg media or by the local newspaper.

J - 15 A desire for better radio service was expressed, particularly in rural areas.

J - 16 Newspapers of larger cities are thought to be vastly superior to those of smaller towns. Most rural citizens attempt to obtain big city papers, even though they then miss out on local information.

# alienation: cultural deprivation of minorities

*“Each culture has its own Shakespeare and Dickens. Television should provide something from each culture rather than concentrate on the English....If I were to store my values away and accept purely English values I would be untrue to myself”.*

Dissatisfaction with mass media programming was identified among many minority groups (e.g., age, ethnic and taste groups) in all areas of the province which did not have a rich choice of or access to the media. The media are currently used by new Canadians to familiarize themselves with the culture and language of the country. Television was particularly important in this regard but was challenged because of the poor selection of programs to suit minority tastes. This problem was most acute in areas with poorer media access.

Sports events, particularly hockey games, were felt to dominate programming. The older people would like programs, especially on radio, directed towards them, and they do not like the old people image as it is portrayed on television.

Native Canadians felt that the media could be productively used to educate mainstream society about their folkways and to reduce the isolation of reserve people.

The lack of communication between French and English people was acknowledged and some specific problems were expressed by French people.



- K - 1 The immigrant groups discussed at length the problems involved in overcoming social, cultural and language barriers. The media, especially television and newspapers, do help, particularly in overcoming the language barrier.
- K - 2 Ethnic groups were disappointed by the lack of programs that would bring them news of their homeland and programs which would disseminate their cultural heritage.
- K - 3 While some immigrants commented on the value of ethnic programming others felt that such programming may only encourage ethnocentricity and discourage assimilation.
- K - 4 People criticized the ethnocentricity of new Canadians.
- K - 5 Older people felt that there was not enough media coverage to satisfy their interests. They would like short programs for "old folks" and radio broadcasts of local church services.
- K - 6 The complaint was made that the music on radio was geared for young people and that young people were really missing out on the good music.
- K - 7 Sports programming (especially hockey) dominates television programming so that often there's nothing else to watch.
- K - 8 Motion pictures were criticized for not containing enough variety. Movies containing

excessive sex and violence were felt to saturate the market.

- K - 9 The general lack of communication between French and English was acknowledged. Specific French problems include the lack of French coverage in the newspapers, French workers do not use their own language to communicate at work, people are afraid to attempt to converse in French and some French people feel that they should "demand French".
- K - 10 Communications are impeded by barriers both between different languages and between dialects of the same language.
- K - 11 The native people surveyed felt that the communications media were tools to be used in breaking down both the isolation of the reserve people and the ignorance of society at large about their specific folkways.
- K - 12 Even within one family there are different cultural needs. Multiple television sets are a solution to the problem of conflicting tastes within the family.
- K - 13 Refined technology (e.g., video cassettes) will provide choices varied enough to suit every taste. People would not be bound to rigid network schedules.
- K - 14 Television keeps people from engaging in more culturally enlightening programs.

# distrust: the unreliability of media information

*“When you are so influenced by T.V. and radio and newspapers, I mean how does the ordinary Joe differentiate?...it (the news) could be very much slanted, right? And you don’t necessarily know the difference, do you?”*

In general, people seemed much less willing to tolerate poor quality news programs than poor quality entertainment programs. The statement was made that we are living in an age of the “information explosion” and it is essential for people to get accurate news reports on current affairs. Nevertheless, all groups seemed aware of the selection, editing, bias and sensationalism that appears to exist in news reporting.

Although people felt it important to control this they felt the problem was not as severe as the censoring of the information. Most people believe that the most reliable information source is a personal friend.

People were aware of the potentially dangerous propagandizing power of television and felt radio was the fastest source of information. Newspapers were cited as the best source of information about local events. Despite the public awareness of the danger of fact distortion, people still want coverage of sensitive issues and they appreciate accurate reporting when they feel they are getting it.



- L - 1 The media often don't get their facts right or quote facts out of context and therefore are misleading.
- L - 2 Often newspapers pander to what they believe to be the views of their readership; in turn those readers have their views comfortably reinforced.
- L - 3 There was a resentful feeling that media often try to hold audience attention by sensationalism.
- L - 5 Television is an effective medium for propagandizing and we get a lot of it.
- L - 6 Newspapers and other media too often speak only for certain interest groups.
- L - 7 Responsible media should expose the public to facts even if it means risking government censure.
- L - 8 It is difficult to assimilate the vast quantities of information to which we are exposed. This saturation necessitates some form of self-imposed selectivity.
- L - 9 Radio and Television provide broad overviews which are easy to absorb.
- L - 10 The value placed on the newspaper varies; for some it is the primary source of news while others use it to supplement information gained from other sources.
- L - 11 It is important to know current events; the need for getting the news was emphasized.
- L - 12 News is obtained most rapidly by radio.
- L - 13 Getting news from a friend is the most reliable way of being informed.
- L - 14 Newspapers are the best source of local information and news.
- L - 15 The visual image of television helps to foster credibility. Television has made certain happenings, such as the moon landing, more accessible and believable experiences.
- L - 16 Some respondents asserted the value of reading books over watching television; yet children suggested that books quickly become dated and lose their relevance.

# resentment and resignation: the harmful effect of commercials

*"We have to accept commercials. They are a fact of life".*

Mass media advertising is a source of concern and irritation to people. There is a widely held preference to reduce the amount of advertising or to modify its presentation, much of which is felt to be disturbing, manipulative, slighting of certain social groups and wasteful in the face of the emerging social concern over excessive consumption.

Participants in all groups clearly resented false or misleading advertising. Recent attempts by the government to regulate and control such methods are recognized and applauded. There is a particularly strong and widespread feeling of contempt for advertisers who direct their sales pitches at children, thereby using children to reach the parents. The fear was

expressed that children were being "brainwashed" by commercials.

Despite the number of complaints expressed about mass media commercials, people appear to be resigned to the belief that advertising is necessary to pay for the programs they enjoy watching. They feel that commercials help to provide higher quality programming and they prefer to have better programs with commercials rather than less entertaining programs with fewer commercials. Suggestions for reducing media advertising include the establishment of a non-commercial network patterned after the B.B.C., the re-institution of radio and television licenses. Even the alternative of pay television was mentioned.



- M - 1 Commercials should be less frequent and run in groups at the beginning or end of each program.
- M - 2 Discontent arises from the continual interruption of entertainment by commercial messages.
- M - 3 False and misleading advertisements, especially those involving unfair contests and the nutritional value of food products, were sources of major concern. Mass complaints to consumer production agencies were suggested as an approach to the problem.
- M - 4 Advertising such as junk mail, telephone promotions and radio campaigns which urge listeners to answer their phones with the station's name are irritating and an invasion of privacy.
- M - 5 Some commercials slight social groups, notably women, the aged, and immigrants.
- M - 6 A very serious cause for alarm was the method by which commercials brainwash children. Unanimous contempt is shown for advertisers who direct their sales pitches at children.
- M - 7 People demonstrated an awareness of advertising techniques and the methods used upon them to capture their attention and make them familiar with the products. They were resentful that advertisers exploited human fears.
- M - 8 The advertising industry with its entrenched middle-class values presents a distorted and unbalanced picture of society.
- M - 9 The view was expressed that media advertisements had little influence upon purchase patterns, yet they offer information about new products on the market.
- M - 10 People responded with cynicism when discussing the marketing given to products which otherwise would not sell and admit that they are occasionally duped by it.
- M - 11 Newspaper advertising helps in comparison shopping.
- M - 12 A strictly non-commercial network patterned after the B.B.C. was described as an appealing alternative.
- M - 13 Some people stated that they would pay more to watch what they want when they wanted it.
- M - 14 An alternative to advertising would be to have television and radio licenses.
- M - 15 Although advertising is a source of much irritation and even resentment, people are resigned to the belief that it is necessary to pay for the programs they want to watch and listen to.
- M - 16 Commercials help to get higher quality programming. Better programs with commercials are generally preferred to poorer quality programs without advertisements.
- M - 17 Recent attempts by the government to enforce advertising standards are recognized and appreciated.
- M - 18 The general tone of the remarks about advertisements on entertainment media was that change is needed.

# ambivalence: the cost of communication

*"Life is so short and if you just have to struggle through earning enough money to put food on the table and have a roof over your head, I don't think it's worth it".*

Any discussion concerning the cost of communications must be placed within the wider context of the cost of living. The latter issue is a subject which raised great concern in the survey. Communication and related costs are viewed as being only a very small part of the greater problem.

People are aware of the indirect as well as the direct cost of communications. Advertising, as the major indirect cost, created a dilemma for most people. They feel that media advertising increases the price of products but they are concerned that the abolition of commercials would result in increased unemployment which is a problem of greater gravity in the minds of most people.

It is feared that the automation of communication equipment, such as computers, also places further strain on the current situation of widespread unemployment. Therefore, while people would like to reduce their individual communication costs, they fear that to do so may have more serious repercussions in the economic system of which they are a part. For this reason many people focused their demands not on eliminating advertising but

on reducing what they felt to be excessive commercialism.

Examples of this kind of unnecessary advertising included media commercials for essential products (e.g., the utilities, Bell and Hydro) which must be purchased anyway. People were also critical of the intensive advertising of very similar products of different manufacture. The alternative of pay television was suggested for the financing of programs with fewer commercials.

The direct costs of television and the telephone, in particular, did not meet with widespread disapproval (except for the previously noted situation in Northwestern Ontario) because of the satisfaction derived from them. There was greater concern and distrust expressed about Bell Canada's monopolistic practices in general than about telephone rates in particular.

Inaccurate or unfair media reports were feared to have a profound adverse effect on local economies. Exaggerated reports of pollution and racial frictions disturbed Northern Ontarians because they felt that the tourist trade, a vital industry to local economies, would decline.



N - 1 Because communications cost money, there is a need for either advertising or public funding.

N - 2 Television is seen as a medium which is expensive to operate. Methods of pay television are suggested to cover costs although people remember the failures of pay television in the past. Most conceded that we must have advertising to pay for television.

N - 3 The automation of communication equipment (e.g., computers for mail sorting) is harmful because it leads to unemployment.

N - 4 Although advertising is irritating, to abolish it would lead to unemployment.

N - 5 There is a good deal of unnecessary advertising of products people would have bought anyway. This raises prices needlessly.

N - 6 Advertising of very similar products of different manufacture is unnecessary.

N - 7 Advertising promotes competition and helps to control prices by making people aware of the comparative cost and quality of different products.

N - 8 Bell Canada was taken to task for its monopolistic practices in general and for its "enormous profits", excessive installation costs and aggressive sales policies in particular.

N - 9 The isolated communities in Northwestern Ontario were more concerned about telephone rates than any other groups. It must be borne in mind that calls between communities in this area, are all long distance calls. All communities sampled in the Northwestern region wanted special consideration in the cost of telephone calls (perhaps a government subsidy). This request was made elsewhere in the survey.

N - 10 Correspondence by mail was generally thought to be inexpensive.

N - 11 Television is a cheap and convenient source of entertainment and information.

N - 12 Adverse news coverage affects the economy of the communities which receive it. Exaggerated reports of pollution and racial strife (the so-called Indian problem) were cited. People were resentful in expressing the strong fear that this "bad press" might affect the locally important tourist industry.

# fear: the impact of TV on children

*"I think that television and radio and all those things....express themselves very openly, and I think it changes all the kids....I don't know if I really like that".*

Genuine concern was expressed about the development of children. These children have grown up with television and its influence has become so much a part of their lives that they are unaware of its effect on them. Parents voiced their fears of the effect that media explicitness (especially sex and violence) would have on their children's social and intellectual development. They are uncertain about the educational efficacy of television and they are uneasy about the profound impact they believe television is having on their children.

The eleven to thirteen year-olds in the survey were surprising, in an unpleasant way, by their cynical view of the world which appears to have developed partially because of television, and by their inability to see the obvious effect that television has had on

them. They further had the strongest craving for more and more electronic stimulation and they often expressed a desire for speed in communication.

For example, they said talking is a better way of communicating because it is faster. However, they did not express the idea common to other groups that talking helped them to develop their ideas. This finding suggests that at this age (11 to 13) children are primarily interested in obtaining "facts" and not in processing them. The telephone is good because it is fast, letters are not good because they are not fast. Books seem to a large extent to be absent from many of these children's lives. It appears that children may well be the group that is being most strongly affected by electronic communication.

- O - 1 Many parents fear the debilitating effects of media explicitness on their children. Excessive sex and violence were most often cited.
- O - 2 People expressed the concern that communications influence the morality of children. Often warped stereotypes are presented, for example of a race of people.
- O - 3 Violence is presented in such quantity and in so many contexts that it completely permeates the child's world. Media may unnaturally alter children's attitudes toward death.
- O - 4 Media, especially television, indiscriminately blend the real and the unreal in such a way that the young viewer may not differentiate between the two. Frequently children see something on television and conclude that they are capable of doing the same.
- O - 5 There should be more control over the timing and the quality of programs that children watch.
- O - 6 The educational efficacy of television diminishes over time. Television may foster laziness and impede a child's development of basic learning and reading skills.



- O - 7 Parents do not spend enough time trying to communicate with their children. This has caused the generation gap.
- O - 8 Parents of young children expressed concern that children can become deeply engrossed in viewing to the detriment of other activities.
- O - 9 In smaller towns there is a need for more community centres in which young people can congregate.
- O - 10 The content of much advertising is bad for children. An example is the association of alcohol with sports.
- O - 11 Despite a profusion of entertainment available these days, children are wandering the street more than they used to and doing fewer constructive things.
- O - 12 The general consensus on the part of adults was that children would do more homework and be more involved in sports were it not for television. Activities such as music lessons, reading, visiting and playing would take its place.
- O - 13 Children contended that "facts are boring" and they applauded television's predilection for the unrealistic and the "impossible".
- O - 14 Children maintained that television does not paint a realistic portrait of society.
- O - 15 The 11 to 13 year olds in the survey seemed unconcerned with television's violence. Ironically these same children were critical of newspapers for presenting only that which is factual and therefore boring.
- O - 16 Children are totally and utterly cynical in regard to what they see on the screen. But they are fascinated by it and their feelings are extremely ambivalent.
- O - 17 They are unable to perceive the influence of television in their daily lives. Yet they are cynical about television and it seems that this cynicism has been transferred to every field which in some way depends on advertising (e.g., radio, newspapers, etc.). They are wiser beyond their age in this respect.
- O - 18 Children know and express what they feel is wrong with television; poor programming; lack of content; lack of credibility and too much advertising. They also know what they want to see on television: more instructive shows; programs with educational or general interest value. They feel that television should communicate knowledge.
- O - 19 Children failed to develop ideas as to how to eliminate what they do not like and how to bring about what they wanted.
- O - 20 Children recognized the negative influence that television had on children younger than themselves but were oblivious to its effect on themselves.
- O - 21 Children realize that there is often a conflict between television and their studies, but they take this as a fact of life.
- O - 22 They blame parents who let children look at restricted shows.
- O - 23 On the positive side most children regard television as a means of relaxation.
- O - 24 What children would like to see:
- television should communicate knowledge;
  - television should educate;
  - television should show the useful and the essential;
  - television should show how people in other lands live;
  - violence should be banned;
  - there should be no commercials on television;
  - every program should have a rating.

# power: desire for a more self-directed environment

*"I'll just select what I want to hear ..."*

The desire for a more self-directed environment was expressed at two different levels. People recognize the critical influence that the mass media have on the conduct of their lives. Because of these considerations they question where the control of media should be.

At the one level is the issue of who should control society's exposure to media. At present, most people feel powerless in effecting the changes they feel are desirable and they believe that there should be greater citizen input and participation in deciding what society should be exposed to.

Nevertheless, people realize that even if more agreeable media guidelines were established, there would still be a great diversity in the tastes and tolerances of people within the province. For this reason they also express a need for greater self-control over exposure at the level of the individual and the family.

- |       |   |        |  |
|-------|---|--------|--|
| P - 1 | If you do not like television you should boycott it.  |        | inferior programming to actively boycotting such fare in order "to force them off the air".  |
| P - 2 | People should let their views be known by writing letters.  | P - 9  | Group organizations such as labour unions need to make their positions about the local scene known.  |
| P - 3 | The Sesame Street petitions in North Bay prove that people can get changes.   | P - 10 | Democratic government gives people a say in policies only at election time.  |
| P - 4 | Any attempt to improve the quality of communications, particularly of the mass media, is futile.  | P - 11 | If you belong to a political party and participate then you do get a voice.  |
| P - 5 | Collective action such as letter-writing, campaigns and outright boycotts would result in a decrease in ratings and ultimately an increase of overall quality.  | P - 12 | There should be television coverage of the legislature.  |
| P - 6 | There must be a minimal level of quality below which the mass media cannot fall without incurring the complete rejection of the people. The quality would then have to ride back to that lowest common denominator. | P - 13 | Politicians at all levels of government are remote, inaccessible and not open to direct personal communication from their constituents.                |
| P - 7 | The formation of pressure groups may be one effective means of inducing change.   | P - 14 | The bureaucratic screen erected by "the system" often makes it very difficult to receive the very benefits that government was designed to distribute. |
| P - 8 | Attitudes towards improving the quality of media programs range from passively tolerating the right of others to consume  | P - 15 | Overcoming the oppressive machinery of the bureaucracy is often an impossible task.  |
|       |   | P - 16 | Programming is geared to profit rather than to the good of the people.   |



# the need for participation

*"....we've identified some problems there. Things we like and things we don't like about the media and communications. What kinds of things can we do about it? Nothing very much".*

People expressed a feeling of being at the mercy of great powers, of being manipulated, of being coerced into conformity. The old, golden days have been replaced by times in which the ordinary citizen must conform, must deal with a large, vaguely perceived, threatening, inaccessible and unresponsive Establishment (the term was not used but it affords a useful shorthand). People describe a struggle between Them and Us, in which Us, the citizens, lose, and have no place to turn. Whether it is the government, television companies, or mass media advertisers who represent big business organizations, they are inaccessible and unresponsive to the ordinary citizen.

For the most part, the means of seeking desired changes did not involve any on-going interaction between the general public and the powerholders. There is no such easy access to power. People tended to advocate the ad hoc measures of petitioning and boycotting as the only practical means of influence available.

P - 17 There is not enough communication between the media and the viewers regarding program content.

P - 18 Program content is dictated by advertisers. The criterion is simply how much money a program can make.

P - 19 Advertisers on television have great control over people's minds because they are able to purchase prime time.

P - 20 The problem of business control over exposure is more acute in areas with a minimal selection of channels.

P - 21 People feared that sponsors or other unseen forces may be influencing or suppressing the news.

P - 22 People are aware that much media content is under the direct control of sponsors. Feeling that it is the business man who runs their television, people are both resentful and resigned to live with this type of control.

P - 23 In some areas people ascribed their ineffectiveness in influencing media content to the lack of competition among local media.

P - 24 Communications were seen by many as being intimately connected with power. Communications media can be effectively used only by large organizations.

P - 25 There should be an effective channel for citizen feedback. Examples include weekly phone-in-programs or opinion polls after programs.

P - 26 There is more control over radio than television because you can phone in and they will listen to your comments.

P - 27 Attempts to influence television content and policy is a slow and inefficient process.

P - 28 Hot Line shows were well received because they give the participant a channel through which to vent his opinions and grievances.

## the need for self-control

thing that bothers me most about  
on is that I tend to leave it on and I  
smerized by it. I am not selective  
...it is a conscious effort and that's  
bothers me....When a commercial  
on I will sit through a commercial  
en say, why did I do that? That is a  
f time".

Many people regarded their television viewing as habitual, time-consuming and almost addictive. They were uncertain about how healthy such behaviour was because they noticed that such viewing disrupted patterns of family and social life, and that a significant amount of viewing involved programs they did not like.

They saw therefore a need to modify their viewing habits, to control their exposure and that of their families rather than being passive victims of the media. They were uncertain however, about how to achieve this. The desire for a more self-directed environment was expressed as a desire for privacy from communications they did not want. Telephone advertising methods, radio promotions and "junk mail" were mentioned in addition to poor quality television programs. The general fear that technological advances in communications systems would result in further invasions of privacy was expressed.



- Q - 1 The media should not be censored but people should learn to watch and read what they want.
- Q - 2 There are too many kinds of people to allow an extensive control of the media. It is difficult to decide what you would censor.
- Q - 3 It is necessary to have controls over television, whether self-imposed or otherwise.
- Q - 4 It is essential to safeguard the element of personal choice. People were critical of being forcefully exposed to communication via outdoor loudspeakers or closed circuit screens.
- Q - 5 Because some programs have a detrimental effect on children parents should control the family's exposure.
- Q - 6 The last stage of the content filtering mechanism still rests within the family and parents are able to control what they feel is suitable for the family.
- Q - 7 While people admitted that it was difficult to be a good censor at home, the majority said they tried to exercise some control.
- Q - 8 Parents are hard pressed to shield their children from exposure to the explicit sex aired on television.
- Q - 9 Because we live in an age of communication saturation, people are forced to be highly selective about the material to which they expose themselves. There is a danger of becoming overly selective and thus arbitrarily narrowing one's perspective.
- Q - 10 Television is only rewarding when viewed very selectively.
- Q - 11 The concept of pay television was introduced and it was suggested that this would force the viewer to develop more discriminating habits.
- Q - 12 Although it is possible to be selective about programming content, you cannot control insulting commercials which interrupt the content.
- Q - 13 Telephone promotion is a particularly odious form of advertising - a blatant invasion of privacy.
- Q - 14 Radio campaigns which urge the listener to answer the phone with the station's name are a refinement of promotions which invade privacy.
- Q - 15 Billboard advertising is distasteful and blights the landscape.
- Q - 16 Chain letters are annoying.
- Q - 17 Man is being controlled by technology rather than controlling it.
- Q - 18 People need to work at learning how to use their leisure time. They rely too heavily on electronics.
- Q - 19 Technological advance in communication systems results in invasions of privacy.

# hope and doubt: the role of government

*"Then it comes back to some type of control, doesn't it?"*

There is a strong sense that telecommunications are not providing what people want. In some cases the areas of satisfaction or dissatisfaction seem to be well established and definite government responses to these issues are thought to be feasible. These issues include the need for more equality in access to media, and here cable television is thought to have real potential; a desire has been expressed for stricter legislation to control dishonest and upsetting advertising, and for more effective channels of communication and feedback with government. Most issues raised in the survey were approached with ambivalence or uncertainty. People were not sure what government should do specifically to improve the role of communications in their lives.

Censorship of the media is a problem for most people. While some media content is objectionable and in need of change, they fear the consequences of having government in control of the media. People recognized the philosophic complexity of this problem and although actively pursuing some resolution,

they have not taken a permanent or comfortable position on the question of censorship. Nevertheless, when it was understood that government control of media was in the public interest, such control was accepted.

In spite of their problems and dilemmas people were hopeful. For all their negative comments about television, people still watch it with at least some expectations or hopes for positive experiences.



- R - 1 Many parents, though trying to impose selected viewing on their children, are beginning to sense the futility of the enterprise. They would like to see legislation to control the excessive sex, violence and moronity on television but feel inadequate in stating just what this legislation should be.
- R - 2 Censorship of the media is a real problem. Some media content is objectionable and in need of change but many people fear the consequence of having government control society's exposure. It would be unfair to have the morality of a few imposed on the whole population.
- R - 3 It is difficult to find a solution to the problem of bias, sensationalism and distortion in media news reporting. While some mentioned more rigid external control, others felt this inevitably invokes the spectre of totalitarian censorship.
- R - 4 There was a feeling that government influences media content. When it was understood that government control of media was in the public interest such measures were appreciated.
- R - 5 The thought that political pressure can cause newspapers to suppress information was upsetting.
- R - 6 Although some people suggested greater government control as a solution to communications problems, others expressed distrust and hinted at government complicity.
- R - 7 The sense of isolation from the government, the sense of "them versus us" and mistrust of Toronto were widespread.
- R - 8 People cited their own ignorance of the inner workings of government and of the political process as graphic proof of the government's poor communication with people.
- R - 9 The view was expressed that the government should take a stronger hand in the dissemination of public service information over the media, especially on such topics as drug abuse and venereal disease.
- R - 10 Ambivalent feelings were displayed about the prospect of nationalizing any major instrument of communications.
- R - 11 The imposition of Canadian content quotas and the consequent erection of "artificial barriers" tends to protect that which is inferior but Canadian at the expense of that which is superior but of foreign origin.
- R - 12 The preceding view was countered by those who feel the need to preserve our cultural heritage against the inundation of American media material.
- R - 13 All groups were irritated by the frequency, dishonesty and stupidity of television advertisements. They found the disruption of programs disturbing. Many insisted that the government should intervene and effect better controls on advertising.

## PART III:

# RESEARCH DESIGN AND ANALYSIS – THE PROFESSIONAL VIEWPOINT

### THE ATTITUDE SURVEY METHOD

The research technique particularly suited to generate subjective information in an open-ended or unstructured format is the group discussion. People were asked to discuss with others the meaning of communications in their lives and its attendant issues, problems, concerns and solutions. Each group discussion was moderated by an experienced leader whose main functions were to ensure that every person participated in the discussion and to solicit free association responses to questions relating to the effect of communications on the individual's life and on the public at large.

An early briefing held by the Ministry with the consultant firms who carried out this phase of the research (Appendix 1) established standards for the neutral approach of group moderators. This technique was designed to reduce bias, to prevent the imposition of some hidden agenda devised by

either the independent moderator or the Ministry and to ensure the eventual comparability of the information gained from each of the study's eight regions.

### THE SAMPLE GROUPS

The survey included a total of seventy group interview sessions conducted with nearly 850 subjects across the province (Appendix 1). The samples were selected by Elliott Research Corporation. Prospective discussants were randomly selected from the telephone book. Once contacted, they were screened according to age, occupation, sex and ethnic background. There were some deviations from this procedure, notably in the smaller communities where group members knew one another and discussion participants were invited by word of mouth. Eligible persons were assigned to the appropriate group, each group being composed of participants with similar socio-demographic profiles (Appendix

2). Discussants were informed that they would be asked to express their "opinions about various forms of communications", that the discussion would last one to one and a half hours, and that they would be compensated for attending.

### DATA ANALYSIS

With the subjects' consent all discussions were audio tape-recorded and some were video tape-recorded in order to provide a complete and permanent record of all survey information.

All the tapes were then fully transcribed to provide a complete data base for social factor analysis. The consultant analysts for each region of the survey read through all transcripts and extracted all inherently expressed ideas (phrases, sentences, paragraphs) verbatim from each transcript. These expressions were then classified into empirically derived subject categories.

The analysts' next task lay in tabulating, in a point system, each of the distinct ideas expressed within each of the derived categories. These are conveyed as component findings in the text of this report and are identified by alpha-numerics, e.g. A - 1. Each point form statement is therefore linked to supportative quotations from the transcripts.

The point form statements, written in the words of the consultant information-processing team, were then re-sorted by a Ministry analyst and a series of discussions between members of the Ministry's research project led to the final selection of the categories presented. The major findings and recommended actions for government were derived by the Ministry's Project Manager from the body of information contained in these final categories.

## THE PROBLEM OF BIAS

A hierarchy of susceptibility to bias exists in the methods used in this study. At the first level there is the record of the group discussion on audio and video tape which is most bias-free. The existence of a "hidden agenda", that is of preconceived questions in the minds of group leaders, is the main source of contamination. One can only suggest that, as a result of the orientation session held for the consultants, this bias may be common to all consultants.

The second stage of information presentation, the formation of empirical categories, is very susceptible to the bias of the individuals developing the categories. An attempt to remove bias has been made by having many people involved in the derivation of categories from the empirical data. The consultant analysts; the principal consultant; the Ministry analyst and the Project Manager were all involved in the final process.

The articulation of verbatim ideas into the condensed statements by consultants is not as great a source of bias as might be expected. The transformation occurred between the ordinary speech language of the participants and that of the consultant. Technical language which introduces great bias when converted from everyday speech, was scrupulously avoided.

The summary of major findings and recommended actions is the most highly processed form of the data. Because it is so highly processed, it provides the conceptual framework which gives the clearest meaning to the data. Nevertheless, the major advantage of this presentation format is that another person may use the same data available to the research team to form his own analysis. He may compare his findings with those presented in the report at three distinct stages of data reduction. Therefore, although bias has not been totally eliminated in the study, it is at least open to examination.



## the participants' viewpoint

The group discussions were enthusiastically received by the participants. Even when they were identified as being government initiated, people accepted and encouraged this form of dialogue. The following are some typical comments made by participants:

- "At the beginning of the session I felt a little uncomfortable. But when we got into it and everybody started talking, I felt that I could talk freely."
- "I found the evening to be very interesting and entertaining. I think a lot can be accomplished in the line of communication if the voice of the people is heard."
- "Very interesting two hours. Now I'll be able to do a lot of thinking on several of the subjects that we talked about. It was stimulating. The moderator was very good in that he did not try to influence anyone and kept order and continuity of conversation."
- "In generally speaking about tonight's discussion from my point of view, I think it was a fair discussion and if some of the facts will be paid some attention, we the people could profit. Improve our life."
- "Communication encompasses everything. You can not separate it from your life. Today we have to develop our ability to communicate. I personally have difficulty in communicating. I found this meeting easy and relaxed."
- "Very informative, interesting. A very good cross-section viewpoint."
- "I thought this session was very interesting and educational to see other people's views. A nice change from T.V."
- "I think that this is the most constructive thing the big blue machine has done. I was pretty down on the Conservatives but maybe if people knew what they were doing. I really enjoyed this."

# APPENDIX 1

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Environics Research Group

Carleton University

Environics Research Group

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Laurentian University

# APPENDIX 2

## SCHEDULE OF GROUP DISCUSSION SURVEYS

### 1973

Toronto	March 19 - 24	North Bay	April 12 - 14
St. Catharines	March 26 - 28	Sturgeon Falls	April 16
Welland	March 29	Cornwall	April 16 - 17
Windsor	March 30	Renfrew	April 18
Thunder Bay	April 2 - 7	Pembroke	April 19
Kenora	April 9 - 10	Collingwood	April 24 - 25
Red Lake	April 11	Owen Sound	April 26
Dryden	April 12	Windsor	May 8

A total of 70 group interview sessions were conducted involving 850 subjects.



## **APPENDIX 3**

### **DISCUSSION GROUPS BY SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- GROUP 1 - Men and Women aged 18 - 24.
- GROUP 2 - Working Women aged 25 - 49.
- GROUP 3 - Blue Collar Workers, Men, aged 25 - 49.
- GROUP 4 - Non-Working Women, aged 25 - 49.
- GROUP 5 - White Collar Workers, Men, aged 29 - 45.
- GROUP 6 - Immigrants, Men and Women.
- GROUP 7 - Women, aged 50 plus.
- GROUP 8 - Men, aged 50 plus.
- GROUP 9 - Boys and Girls aged 11 - 13.







